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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, April 4, 1935.

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Hello folks. Over in the Department of Agriculture the typewriters are clicking away these days answering the thousands of letters that you folks are writing about this and that problem, and down at the Government Printing Office the great printing presses are running almost night and day turning out bulletins and other literature containing information for the farmers and the gardeners of the country. Your letters are like the straws that tell which way the wind is blowing for they tell us what you are thinking, what you are planning to do this summer and what you contemplate planting and growing to add to your living comfort the coming year.

One of the most frequent questions is about the proper dates for planting the various crops, especially the more tender vegetables. No hard and fast rule can be given as to the time of planting the various vegetable crops because no two seasons are exactly alike and the best we can do is to follow the law of averages. There are certain natural signs that are more dependable than actual dates. For example, it is an old custom to begin the planting of corn as soon as the dogwoods are in bloom, or when the oak leaves have attained the size of a squirrels ear. Glancing across the room I see a smile on Mr. Salisbury's face, but there is more good common sense in following certain of these guides that nature gives us than all the schedules and planting dates that you can get together. In the spring when everything begins to take on new life we are sometimes inclined to get a little too hasty and let that urge to be planting something influence our better judgement. Of course it behooves us to be up and doing in order to take advantage of the full length of the growing season.

You folks down near the Gulf of Mexico are about starting on the second lap of your gardening rounds for the year while some of our northern folks are just beginning to feel of the soil of their gardens to see if it is dry enough to work. We can very conveniently divide our garden vegetables into three groups. First, those that are quite hardy like peas, onions, cabbage, kale, lettuce and spinach. Second, the group that will stand considerable cold but not actual frost or freezing. This group includes corn, snap beans, tomatoes and potatoes. Third, the warm weather crops including the melons, squashes, cucumbers, lima beans, peppers, eggplant and sweetpotatoes. I often say that it is all right to take a chance on an early planting of corn, snap beans and potatoes for if you escape frost damage you get your crops early and if you lose you can replant. In the case of potatoes it is safe to plant quite early because of the time required for the potatoes to come up, then in case of a freeze you may be able to protect your potatoes by turning a furrow of loose soil over them. When it comes to lima beans and the very tender crops, it pays to wait until both the air and the soil are warm.

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We have received a great many letters recently asking if the second growth of parsnips is poisonous. To these inquiries we answer that parsnips are not poisonous at any stage of their growth either the first season or after they start growth the following spring. The cases of poisoning that have been attributed to parsnips are due to people eating the wild parsnip or poison cicuta which they mistake for regular parsnips. There can be no danger from eating the parsnips that you have grown in your garden.

We are getting many letters from people who want to grow garlic and horseradish for the market. We have some little circulars that we send in answer to these inquiries but neither garlic or horseradish offer any special opportunity and only a comparatively few acres of each are required to supply the demand, besides there are only a few localities that are adapted for growing these crops. Celery comes in for its share of attention but celery is a highly specialized crop, however most any careful gardener can grow two or three hundred plants for some home use.

I want to read you a letter from a Pennsylvania correspondent. Quote "Each year I have considerable difficulty raising tomatoes, due to the fact that the leaves dry up and turn brown long before the crop is ripe. I would be glad to identify the disease and know the treatment if any." Unquote. Apparently this is a case of tomato leaf-blight, a disease of the foliage that can be prevented by spraying the plants once a week or ten days with bordeaux mixture. I can send you the directions or you can get them from your county agent or your State College and Experiment Station. In the South, also in parts of the North, the tomato wilt disease is troublesome but in the case of the wilt the whole plant dies.

You have doubtless heard numerous references on the Farm and Home Hour to the Japanese cherry blossoms which I was about to say have made Washington City famous. For the benefit of any of you who are planning a trip to see these famous blossoms I called Mr. Saunders, the gentleman who has charge of the parks in which the Japanese cherry trees are located, this morning and he advises that the early or single blossoms are still very fine and that the later or double blossoms will probably be at their best between April 13th and 20th, however, the opening of the blossoms will depend upon the weather but it looks as though Washington would have cherry blossoms for Easter. So long, and I hope to be with you again soon in the Garden Calendar.

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